

THE CONFEDERATE NAVAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

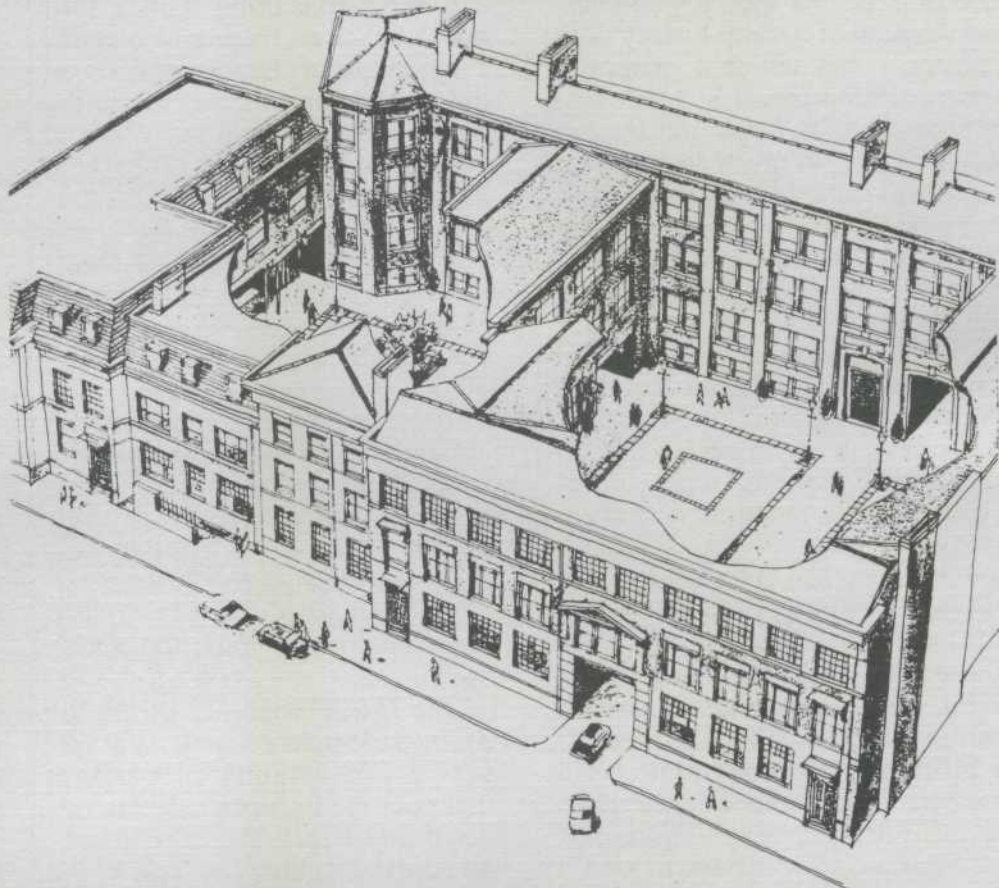
Issue Number Eight -- October 1991

Confederate Headquarters In Liverpool Sees Rebirth

GREAT CREDIT should go to Birkenhead natives Jerry Williams and John Taylor who several years ago gained protected historic status for Liverpool's 10 Rumford Place, offices of Fraser Trenholm and informal British CSN headquarters during the War. Since they couldn't tear it down, British market forces have made the best of it and have now turned the building complex, just a block off Liverpool's waterfront, into a highly desirable suite of offices dedicated to the unique history they contain.

Now called Rumford Court, the buildings have been carefully restored and the various available spaces bear the names of those that made them famous: Alabama House, Bulloch House, Trenholm House, Frazer House, Charleston House, Enrica House, Winslow House, and Semmes House. They vary in size from about 2500 square feet to nearly 6,000 square feet and do indeed look like pleasant places to work (see accompanying illustration).

If you want to buy one, call Sykes Waterhouse at 9 North John Street, the agents, 011-44-51-236-9152. If you're in the area and want to visit, Rumford Court is located directly behind the Atlantic Towers Hotel, just down the street from the Pig and Whistle pub. Another CSN landmark that will live on into history.



Fort Fisher Rescue Project Receives Design Funding — Battle For \$8M From State and Fed Looms Ahead

PAUL LAIRD, the chairman of the Committee To Save Fort Fisher, reports that \$250,000 in design development funding for the project to rescue Fort Fisher from being washed into the sea was voted in by the North Carolina House Of Representatives this summer, following the earlier vote of the State Senate.

A further \$250,000 was added to the fund by vote of the U.S. Congress this fall, so design of the proposed revetment to protect the fort will go forward as planned.

The budget for the actual construction of the revetment is \$8 million, half of which must be voted by the State Legislature in order to qualify for matching funds from Congress.

The vote will come up in a special session in May, and it is expected to generate a hard fight with many other competing programs, since there is little money to go around. To add your continued support to the fight, write: Paul Laird Box 330, Wilmington, NC 28402. (919) 762-2611.

Editorial:

Ships Beyond Our Shores

I RECENTLY gave a paper at an historical gathering at the U.S. Naval Academy — it was one of three in a special Confederate division of a naval history conference — in which I generally congratulated the U.S. Navy and the populus at large for having come to care so much for preserving naval ships and naval heritage. It ran a bit like this: just ten years ago, if a ship was on the bottom, it was fair game for anyone to dig up, poke around in, and carry away, regardless of its historical importance and value to posterity. No one cared about it. It was a treasure hunter's market, though more historical treasure was destroyed than monetary treasure was ever found.

All that has changed now, thanks in good part to the legacy of the Confederate raiders and those who still care about them. First, the discovery of the wreck of the *C.S.S. Alabama* sparked off a debate over who owned it — did we care enough about our heritage to claim it, despite the diplomatic and bureaucratic hassle it would cause?

As it turned out, we did, for the first time, though it took some serious prodding in official circles to get it underway. Then, as pieces were being torn off the *C.S.S. Florida* and *U.S.S. Cumberland* to make a quick buck for CW relics dealers, it turned out that the F.B.I. was willing to come down and say "hands off, that's ours!" despite the length and expense of an official investigation. Stirred by its involvement in this case, the Navy picked up the standard and in the recent *Alabama* bell case in New Jersey asserted its claim to all U.S. naval artifacts everywhere. Looters and pillagers beware, sunken naval vessels are sacrosanct, whatever side of the War they were on!

This might seem to sew up the

CSN preservation effort — the U.S. Navy has taken charge, so let it do its thing (and a far-reaching and expensive thing it may turn out to be). Yet, there still remains a major part of the former CSN on the bottom unprotected. It is the vessels that survived the War and perished elsewhere in private hands. The *Sumter*, sold after being blockaded in Gibraltar, sunk on the Dogger Bank. The *Tallahassee*, sold to Japan and sunk off Honshu. The *Shenandoah*, sold to the Sultan of Zanzibar and sunk off South Yemen in a storm.

There are more, and the CSN is not alone. There are many historic ships of many different cultures sunk in waters far from their homes which remain totally unprotected because the internationally accepted rule still is: find it, dig it up, and its yours to do with as you like.

The U.S./French accord on the *Alabama* should become an example of international cooperation that puts the intrinsic cultural value of *any* wreck above its monetary salvage potential. This is the kind of cultural cooperation that will become possible in the construction of world confederations such as the European Economic Community and the incipient U.S./Canada/Mexico trade alliance.

There is still a great deal left to do to protect and explore the heritage of the CSN that lies on the bottom here in America, much less overseas. Nevertheless, since the Confederate Navy in its four year lifetime was an international force to be reckoned with, so we must keep equally broad our horizons today and try to apply the lessons we have learned at home to help preserve not only our own naval heritage but those of other nations which we once so hopefully befriended and befriended us...

— John Townley

C.S.S. Florida and *U.S.S. Cumberland* Cases Still Being Actively Pursued By Federal Prosecutor's Office

THE INVESTIGATION into the taking of artifacts from the wrecks of the *C.S.S. Florida* and the *U.S.S. Cumberland* is still underway, according to a recent statement from the Norfolk Federal Prosecutor's office. A new attorney there has been put on the case as well as a new F.B.I. agent and evidence is still being rounded up and legal options analyzed before further steps are taken. As this promises to be one of the first U.S. criminal cases brought in this area, it seems clear that great care is being exercised so that any precedents set will be meaningful in the long term and offer as much protection to other historical wrecks as possible.

Since the statute of limitations on this kind of case is five years, there is still plenty of time to see that it is done with fair and deliberate execution and authoritative effect.

This newsletter is published quarterly by The Confederate Naval Historical Society, Inc., the non-profit corporation for the preservation of the maritime history of the Confederacy, for distribution to its Associates. All material ©copyright 1991 by The Confederate Naval Historical Society, Inc. Back issues are \$3 ppd to Associates only. Associate membership in the CNHS is available at the following ranks: Lieutenant (\$20), Captain (\$50), Commodore (\$1000+), and Rear Admiral (\$10,000+). All associates receive a 15"x18" CSN Commission for their ranks, Capt. and above receive special presentations commensurate with their stations. All contributions are tax deductible. CNHS, 710 Ocean Road, White Stone, VA 22578, U.S.A. Phone: (804) 435-0014. Editor: John Townley.



Artist Profile:

Bill McGrath

A PRINT OF the painting "Richmond By Moonlight, 1863" came our way recently and we have to most heartily recommend it and its artist, Bill McGrath. He has also done another excellent scene of a very busy

"City Point, Virginia, March 31, 1865," and is now working on a scene of the ironclads *Monitor* and *Virginia*.

Our black and white reproduction does not do justice to the shimmering colors and the fine detail of the Richmond riverfront which includes the CSN vessels *Richmond*, *Drewry*, *Virginia II*, *Patrick Henry*, and the beginnings of the *Fredericksburg*. Limited

edition prints (33 1/2" x 25") are available, signed and numbered and also remarked, from the artist at WRM Graphics and Illustrations, 3667 Traver Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44122, (216) 491-9314. Call or write for further information and prices.

The original painting is currently on view at the Mystic Seaport Museum Gallery in Mystic, Connecticut.

Alabama Dives In France Proceed On

MADAME ULANE Bonnel, director of the French *Alabama* efforts reports divers this spring on the wreck of the *C.S.S. Alabama* found unusually clear water which enabled pictures of the wreck as a whole to be taken for the first time. She has promised us more details later this fall...

Destroyer *Semmes* Is Decommissioned

THE CHARLESTON-based guided missile destroyer *Semmes*, after nearly 29 years' service, was decommissioned last month. She is being transferred to the Greek navy which will rename her *Kimon*, after a Greek naval hero.

She will be refitted in Philadelphia and will be the first of four

U.S. guided missile destroyers to join the Greek navy under long-term lease. Her new home port will be Salamis, site of the famous naval battle in 480 B.C.

She served her last tour of duty in the Caribbean hunting drug-smugglers and was decommissioned just after the submarine rescue ship *Petrel* -- coincidentally the name Raphael Semmes used as a ruse to first identify the *Alabama* before her engagement with the *U.S.S. Hatteras*.

Where They Lie:

Blockade Runner *America/Camilla*

By Kevin Foster

MENTION OF the schooner yacht *America* conjures up images of United States prowess at sea. She is best known for winning the famous "Hundred Guinea Cup," known since as the "America's cup." *America's* career as a blockade runner and Union Navy warship is less well known but just as romantic. She survived longer than any other Confederate vessel.

America was built for a syndicate made up of six New York Yacht Club members. She was to exhibit the best of American ship design at the first World's Fair, the Crystal Palace of 1851. For the designer they chose talented, 31-year-old George Steers, known for his innovative pilot boat designs. *America* was built in the shipyard of William H. Brown on East 12th Street in New York City in the winter of 1850-51.

Brown built *America* of wood with an uncommon hull form. The bow and entrance were sharp and the widest part of her hull was aft

of the center of her length. She measured 170 50/95ths tons register (U.S.), 225 61/94ths tones (British builders old measurement) and was 96 feet, 3 inches long, 22 feet, 8 inches in beam, 9 feet, 7 inches depth of hold, and had a draft of 12 feet.

Brown contracted to deliver the yacht on April 1, 1851 for \$30,000. Bad weather delayed the launch; trials took so long that the builders settled for two-thirds of the contract amount. *America* was delivered on June 18, 1851, and departed three days later for Europe.

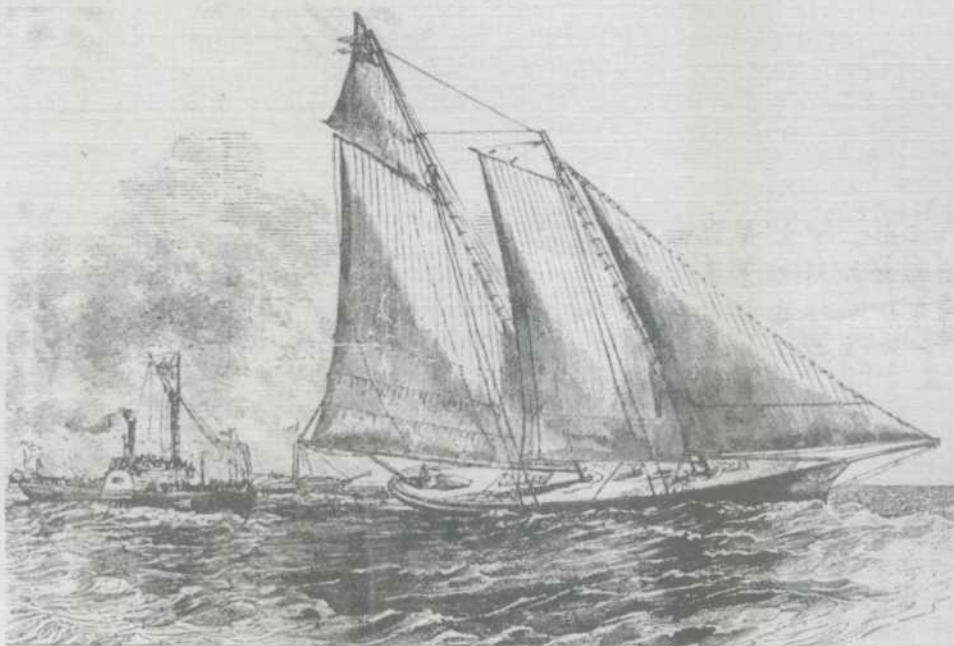
On arrival, *America* challenged any vessel in the Royal Yacht Club to a race for a stake of up to 10,000 guineas. The challenge was left unanswered but *America* was invited to participate in an open race around the Isle of Wight. The race was highly publicized, and a large crowd gathered ashore and afloat to cheer on their favorites on race day. Even Queen Victoria witnessed the race on board her steam yacht *Victoria and Albert*.

The race started badly for *America*. All fifteen of the other race participants crossed the starting line



ahead of her. Within thirty minutes the upstart schooner from the "colonies" gained the lead. *America* maintained her lead in spite of losing her flying jib and jibboom when the breeze freshened. *America* won the "Hundred Guineas Cup" and gave her name to what was to become the most famous yacht race in history.

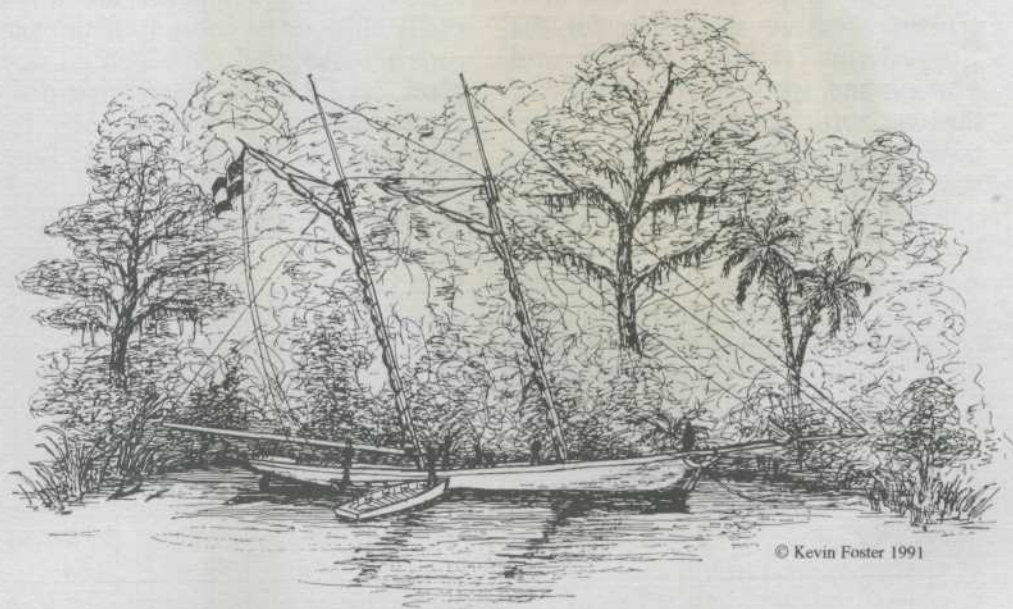
America proved that United States shipbuilding and design skills were as good or better than those of the British, the acknowledged world leaders. The entire United States took pride in the accomplishment. Her purpose complete, *America's* crew was discharged and the yacht was sold to Lord John de Blaquiére of Ireland. Under British registry, the famous yacht made a cruise to the Mediterranean and raced occasionally until 1856 when she was sold to another Englishman, Henry Upton, Viscount Templetown. Upton renamed the yacht *Camilla* but neglected her upkeep and sold her two years later. Luckily for *Camilla*



la, her next owner was the ship-builder Henry S. Pitcher who repaired and rebuilt her of teak. In July 1860, Pitcher sold *Camilla* to Henry Decie of Northamptonshire. Decie was to be *America's* most active owner. He sailed his newly rebuilt showpiece across the Atlantic and visited Richmond and Savannah as secession and war loomed in the United States.

In the South, Captain Decie met many prominent leaders. Decie accepted the Confederate cause as his own. He sold *Camilla* to the Confederate government and continued in command. As a British shipmaster, Decie was ideally placed to provide cover for the famous schooner in British ports. On May 25, 1861, Decie guided *Camilla* through the blockade from Savannah to Ireland carrying government dispatches and agents. On board *Camilla* were government purchasing agents Captain James Heyward North, CSN, and Major Edward D. Anderson. North and Anderson were among the first officers sent to Europe to obtain military supplies and vessels for the nascent Confederate government.

Camilla safely delivered her passengers in the British Isles and awaited further orders. Decie actively promoted his cover story for *Camilla*, racing in a regatta at Queenstown, Ireland, and around the Isle of Wight. *Camilla's* next mission for the Confederacy was to carry diplomatic dispatches from Great Britain and France. In August 1861 she ran the blockade into the St. Johns River, Florida, carrying Confederate diplomatic dis-

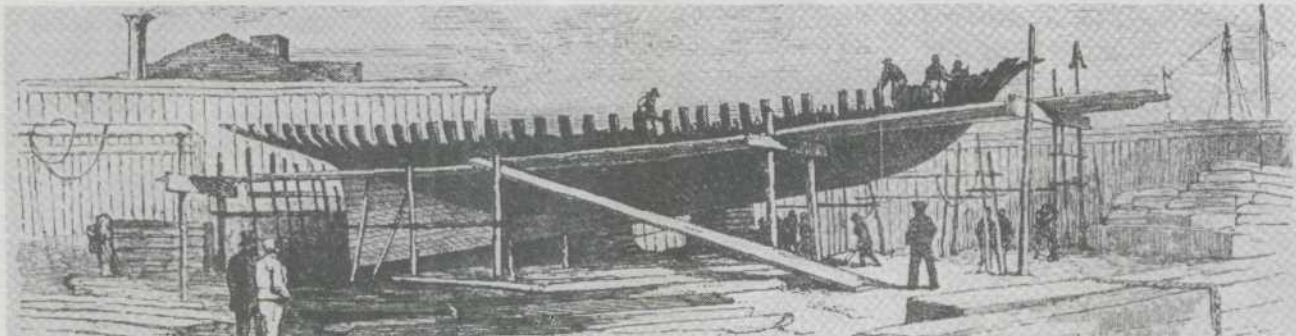


patches. The St. Johns River was only haphazardly blockaded and presented numerous tributaries and swamps to hide the schooner while waiting to run back out through the blockade. *Camilla* remained hidden in Dunn's Creek about seventy miles upriver from Jacksonville. Her topmasts were sent down, the sails and equipment removed.

Florida was predominately wilderness in 1861. Scattered farming settlements and a few plantations dotted northern Florida. Open cattle ranges and wetlands comprised most of the rest. A wild sort of guerrilla warfare was waged in this wilderness between Union landing parties from river gunboats and parties of Confederate horsemen. *Camilla* was scuttled when one such Union combined-operations force moved up the river searching for vessels rumored to be hidden there. The force led by U.S.S. *Otta-*

wa discovered the wreck on March 13, 1862. It was sunk in the deep part of a river bend and only given away by the masts rising from the water. After "a week's hard labor" the Union force salvaged *Camilla*.

The schooner was towed to the Union naval base at Port Royal, repaired, armed with a 12-pounder rifle and two 24-pounder smooth-bores, and renamed U.S.S. *America*. The swift schooner did valuable service on the blockade off Charleston. She captured the blockade running schooners *David Crockett* and *Antelope*, assisted in the salvage of the blockade runner *Princess Royal*, and assisted in the destruction of the *Georgiana* and *Stonewall Jackson*. On May 1, 1863, after one year of service on the blockade *America* was ordered to the temporary quarters of the Naval Academy at Newport, Rhode Island. *America* became a training



ship for midshipmen. She made brief cruises offshore searching for the Confederate raiders *Tacony* and *Florida* and spent the remainder of the war with temporary crews detailed from larger vessels, boarding vessels off the Northern coast.

America was kept in good shape by the U.S. Navy after the war. In August 1870 she even helped to defend the *America's* cup from a challenge by the schooner *Cambria*. Sold in 1873, *America* was bought by retired Union General Benjamin ("Beast" or "Spoons") Butler. General Butler saw that his prize was kept in fine condition and raced her in many regattas. After the General died in 1893, Butler's family kept *America* until 1917.

Facing the possibility of being turned into a Cape Verdean Grand Banks fisherman, *America* was bought by Charles H.W. Foster, a Boston businessman. Four years later, *America* was presented to the Naval Academy for preservation as a relic. She was towed to the Washing-

ton Navy Yard, coppered, and generally stripped of cabin furnishings. *America* suffered from benign neglect, laying in the Dewey basin at the Naval Academy until 1940. In that year the Naval Academy had her removed from the basin and blocked up for storage ashore at the private Annapolis Yacht Yard. The next year Congress responded to an appeal from President Roosevelt to preserve *America* by appropriating \$100,000 to repair and restore her. A ship shed was built over the hull at the yacht yard and work was begun. The beginning of hostilities in December 1941 forced a halt to the work. A heavy snowfall on Palm Sunday, 1942 collapsed the shipshed, severely damaging what was left of the historic vessel. An April 1942 order prevented any work not essential to the war effort and *America* languished rotting until the end of the war. A survey in 1945 indicated that dry rot was so advanced that only a complete replacement of timber could restore

her. *America* was scrapped at the Annapolis Yacht Yard in 1945.

While being dismantled for scrapping in 1945, a number of *America's* artifacts were removed for posterity. Other important pieces had already found their way ashore in her various rebuildings. Artifacts from the *America* can be found today at the Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis and in the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. A fine early half model of *America* is now in the collections of the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia

Being the last Confederate vessel afloat may be said to have earned *America* her final distinction.

Kevin Foster is Assistant Historian for the U.S. Coast Guard, former Acting Director of the Confederate Naval Museum, and founding Vice-President of The Confederate Naval Historical Society.

THE LITTLEST BLOCKADE RUNNER

By Kevin Foster

BLOCKADE RUNNERS are usually thought of as long, low, swift steamers painted "blockade gray." Yet there were large numbers of sailing craft trading through the blockade as well. The largest such were schooners and sloops engaged in coasting trades before the war and enticed to risk the dangers of capture to earn fantastic profits. The smallest were inshore craft forced by desperate times to risk dangerous offshore voyages to the Bahamas or to Cuba to obtain vital supplies or earn a livelihood.

Union officials and spies were ever on the lookout for information on blockade violators of any size. One of the most unusual re-

ports of a blockade runner may record the voyage of the smallest Confederate vessel to visit a foreign port. Thomas Savage, the Union consul at Havana, Cuba, reported to Secretary of State, William H. Seward on June 19, 1863 that:

"A small boat of about four tons, which came in several days ago with one and one half bales of cotton from Tampa (Florida), sailed again to return to that place on the 18th with 16 1/2 pipes of aguardiente (taffia)."

Such a small boat was probably an open boat of under eighteen feet in length. The boat had to travel over four hundred miles, vulnerable to capture at any point, to get from Tampa to Havana. She

brought about seven hundred pounds of cotton, about one year's production of a single family farm. The return cargo was particularly interesting: aguardiente was a potent, even dangerous, alcoholic drink made from cane sugar. *Reed's Shipowners' and Shipmasters' Handy Book* describes a pipe as a type of barrel over four feet long, twice as long as it is round, holding between 90 and 118 gallons of liquid. The boat from Tampa thus returned loaded with around 1650 gallons of alcohol.

Was this the smallest blockade runner? We may never know, but Consul Savage's report of this small boat certainly gives an account of undeniable pluck, and of a tremendous thirst.

Kevin Foster, author of the previous article on the Americal Camilla, specializes in blockade runner research and is now exploring the possibilities of aguardiente in broadening his historical base...

Review:

Confederate States Navy Research Guide

By Thomas Truxton Moebs, Moebs Publishing, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1991.

This major new work by a major historical scholar, researcher, and compiler is well described by its subhead: "Confederate Naval Imprints Described and Annotated, Chronology of Naval Operation and Administration, Marine Corps and Naval Officer Biographies, Description and Service of Vessels, Subject Bibliography." As the subhead suggests, this 578-page 8 1/2" x 11" tome is really five reference works wrapped up in one that will allow the reader to travel far and wide within the history of the CSN without ever having to step outside of this collection.

Researchers looking to find out where original documents are to be found, on the other hand, will

have their way pointed by the extensive imprints section which covers everything from government pronouncements to songs and textbooks along with their present library, museum, or special collection location.

The chronology section is a day-by-day approach that combines material from a variety of sources, notably *Civil War Naval Chronology*, but limits the entries to CSN-related happenings.

The biographies are extensive in number, though brief and restricted to naval service and not to personal history, except for a few pages of footnote biographies taken from Scharf. Nevertheless, there are over a hundred pages of them, more than a good start at chasing down anybody's relative.

The vessel section is excellent as it includes some blockade runners and ships built in Europe that never made it into CSN service, both of which are hard to find in other single reference works like Gibbons or Silverstone. Final denouement of ships that were not sunk in battle, however, would have been nice, a la our "Where They Lie" series.

The source bibliography is enormous, at over 150 pages, and it is a perfect wish list of pieces you never knew existed and wish you could get your hands on, as well as the usual definitive works that most of us are likely to have. It is in this section that Moebs really struts his stuff as a collector and compiler. His previous America-wide *U.S. Reference-iana* is another work for researchers that elegantly displays his skills in this area.

The only frustrating thing about this work is that it makes you want to hit the road and get your hands on all of this stuff in its hiding places around the nation — which is just what Moebs had done, living on a boat with his computer and travelling from one research spot to another.

No matter what other heavy-duty naval research classics you may have, including the ORN and *Civil War Naval Chronology*, you will want to own a copy of this one. Order it from Moebs direct at Box 247, Williamsburg, VA 23187. (804) 229-4165. It's expensive, but we're sure you'll agree it's worth every penny.

Review:

Gray Raiders Of The Sea

By Chester G. Hearn, International Marine Publishing (McGraw Hill), Camden, Maine, 1991.

During a recent following sea, a galley proof copy of this book was catapulted over our transom, with an accompanying letter that would have struck fear into the heart of Gideon Welles:

"The first complete account of the Confederate warships of the U.S. Civil War, telling of their ships, their crews and colorful commanders, and their feats of glory and of how eight rebel ships destroyed nearly half the Ameri-

can merchant fleet. Meticulously researched and powerfully written..."

You get the gist. It at first made us somewhat reluctant to read what turned out to be a very well-written and engaging account of the careers of *Sumter*, *Nashville*, *Florida*, *Clarence* and *Tacony*, *Tallahassee/Olustee*, *Chickamauga*, *Georgia*, *Alabama*, *Tuscaloosa*, and *Shenandoah*.

Three hundred pages is not a lot of space to deal with the naval actions, officers, cruises, economic and social impact of this many ships, but it is the first time the at-

tempt has been made to pull the whole raider story under one roof, so to speak. Much more complete volumes are to be had on most of the ships and their officers and certainly on their impact at home and abroad, but for the novice who hasn't had time to collect all the others or just for those of us who would like a quick reference book of information on the raiders all in one spot, this is definitely a contribution.

It's got a lot of nice period illustrations, a list of Union ships destroyed when and by whom, and a bibliography to help you go find out more about your favorite episodes. Get it as a holiday gift for a relative or friend for an exciting introduction to the CSN — and get the Moebs book for yourself.

Research, Requests, & Comments...

MANY THANKS to all those who wrote in to point out that the officer standing on the deck of the *C.S.S. Alabama* on the cover of the last issue was indeed *not* First Lieutenant John McIntosh Kell but *was* Boarding Master George Townley Fullam. Not enough stripes or beard to be Kell -- besides this editor should have recognized kinfolk when he saw one...

We receive many requests for information and assistance in the mail and we try to answer what we can, given the time constraints of such a volunteer organization. Too much, however, often winds up in a corner subject to later investigation and never sees the light of day again. That is because most of our efforts have been focused on rescuing CSN ships and sites from immediate peril, which must take prece-

dence. If you don't mind risking some time sitting on the shelf, letters may be a satisfactory way to reach us, but if you really want your question answered — or referred to someone who can answer it — give us a ring on the phone. It is a dedicated CNHS number and most of the time there is someone here to answer it, even on weekends, so don't hesitate to call. We have to pay the bill every month, supported by you, so take advantage of it and get instant satisfaction! (804)435-0014. Sorry, we don't have a fax, yet...

We have a xerox of Vol. 1, No. 1 of the magazine "The Confederate Sailor," January 1925, a quarterly. Did any more issues see the light? We'd love to see some. Here's an anecdote from the one we have:

"A boatswain's mate from the cruiser, *Florida*, was attending church one Sunday in Bahia, Brazil. It was the church usually attended by the English colony. Be-

ing hard of hearing, he took a seat in the front pew so that he could hear the preacher better."

"The sermon was on the tendency of the times where the people were leading reckless lives. Seeing the old tar in the front pew, in sailor's uniform, the preacher took on a nautical turn for his sermon and, in describing how the reckless ones were rapidly drifting to perdition, he cried out:"

"You reckless people are going to hell with your upper and lower sails set!"

"This alarmed the old boatswain's mate, and he arose, faced the congregation, at the same time pulling his boatswain's whistle from his pocket, blew it and, putting his hands to his mouth, cried out:"

"All hands shorten sail!"

"It seemed to him they were going too fast."

If there are more issues of "The Confederate Sailor," out there, we'd love to see them.

THE CONFEDERATE NAVAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
710 Ocran Road, White Stone, Virginia, U.S.A. 22578

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WHITE STONE, VA
PERMIT NO. 6